

Commandant of Cadets

Vision

The United States Air Force Academy ... the nation's premier institution for developing leaders of character.

Mission

To educate, train, and inspire men and women to become officers of character, motivated to lead the United States Air Force in service to our nation.

Command Philosophy

We have been entrusted with the most important mission in the United States Air Force—shaping its future. As we strive to educate, train and inspire our cadets to become officers of character and to lead our Air Force and our nation, it is important to stay focused on those qualities that enable us to successfully accomplish that mission.

PEOPLE

Our people are our most valued and valuable resource. Mission first, but people always. It is critical that we provide our people with the resources and means to complete the mission. It is equally important that we create and foster an environment of respect and trust where each person is given the opportunity to maximize his or her potential. Marginalizing any team member is simply not acceptable and could lead to mission failure. Every person has a part to play! Being a good wingman – watching out for your teammates -- is also an important part of successful mission accomplishment.

Being a valued team member also means looking out for oneself and taking responsibility for family, fitness and health, and for personal and professional development. I ask that each of you strive to achieve the proper personal balance in your life. Failure to achieve this balance can have catastrophic results, not only for the mission, but for the lives of those around you. **A well balanced life means time for family and friends, time for physical fitness and health maintenance activities, time to relax and pursue personal projects, and time for professional military education and professional development activities.**

PROFESSION

War is a serious business and it is our profession. With the Global War on Terror prompted by the tragic events of September 11th, we are a nation at war. It is our mission at the Air Force Academy to train the young men and women who will continue this fight, defend our nation, and uphold the values that generations of patriots before us have fought and died for.

Service to our great nation is the noblest of all endeavors. It is a selfless sacrifice, sometimes even the ultimate sacrifice, and therefore we must get it right! We must ensure that every one of our graduates has the qualities and values essential for military service and for making those sacrifices. These values are vital to maintaining our proud Air Force tradition and to accomplishing our mission to fly, fight and win!

TEAMWORK

We need everyone operating at 100% to fully support our critical mission, and the key to reaching that performance level is teamwork – teamwork fostered by mutual respect and trust, communication, being a good wingman, and operating safely.

As a unified team, we can always accomplish much more than we can as individuals operating independently. The synergy created by combining our great and diverse individual talents is what makes us the greatest Air Force in the world. To operate effectively as a team, we must foster an environment of mutual trust and respect. Trust is born of an honest and sincere loyalty to our superiors, subordinates, and peers. Whether we agree or disagree, we must strive to always separate the issue from the individual. Everyone deserves to be treated with respect and dignity—there is no excuse for belittling or degrading anyone, either within or external to this organization. Every team member is important, and each needs to know that others recognize that importance.

Communication is the cornerstone of establishing positive relationships and the foundation of a solid team. Communication enables problem solving at the lowest level and fosters an environment of respect, loyalty, and camaraderie. I expect each and every team member to have the courage to communicate with each other regarding the good, the bad, and the ugly. I also expect you to communicate issues up the chain until they are successfully resolved.

Part of being a good team member means looking out for each other -- being a good wingman. We uplift those who are struggling and steer back to course those who are drifting. I expect all supervisors to get out among your troops and to feel the pulse of your unit—this cannot be done from behind a desk.

Finally, we all have a responsibility to ensure we operate safely both on and off duty. Unsafe practices should be highlighted and measures must be taken to ensure the highest levels of safety. On or off duty, members should carefully consider any activities they engage in that pose a risk to themselves or others and should act accordingly to minimize that risk.

LEADERSHIP

Leading by example and leading from the front remain the most powerful forms of leadership. The quickest way to lose credibility with our troops is to send them out to fly the missions while we sit back in Base Ops and critique. While never crossing the lines between superior and subordinate, it is imperative that we show empathy and compassion, and such understanding is only gained when we actively engage in the activities of our unit and lead our men and women by having them follow our example.

In order to lead by example, our own conduct and bearing with and in front of our troops must be absolutely beyond reproach. As a leader, each of us must know, live and enforce the standards, first for ourselves and then for our charges. In so doing, we will live and enforce the Air Force's Core Values as well.

Accountability is an essential part of leadership. Each and every one of us is accountable and responsible for the actions we take and for the choices we make. As we do our best in every operation to prevent mistakes, we must recognize that errors in judgment may occur. Some of the most fruitful learning comes when we stumble. Those who make honest mistakes, and who seek to correct the problem, and who strive to resolve personal misunderstandings, will receive my full support.

On the other hand, those who blatantly disregard their duty -- whether it be by ignoring standards and regulations, disregarding their unit or teammates, or disregarding professional courtesies and respect -- can expect little sympathy from me.

Responsibility is another essential part of leadership. A good leader must feel and be responsible for his or her people -- responsible for their safety and well-being and for ensuring they have the resources they need to accomplish the mission. Good leaders know their people and know how to motivate and inspire them. Good leaders trust their people to get the job done.

If a leader's guidance is clear and direct and if the leader's people have the means and motivation to accomplish the task, mission accomplishment will almost always be the result!

We also must be good followers before we can be good leaders. Being a good follower is not always easy. It takes loyalty and it takes courage. A good follower is loyal to the unit, the commander, and the mission. This cannot be a blind loyalty, but a loyalty that is fostered and reinforced by common bonds, common experiences, mutual respect, and uncommon courage.

ATTITUDE

Attitude is everything, and a positive attitude and demeanor are contagious!

Leaders who maintain a positive “can-do” attitude create an organizational environment that inspires both subordinates and peers and encourages everyone to aggressively tackle and overcome all challenges before them. **It is important to be “positive about challenges” and not “negative about problems.”**

We have a great mission and each of you should take great pride in the contributions you are making to the future of our Air Force and to the security of our nation. It is inevitable that we will each face challenges that test us and our commitment to seeing the job through. When that occurs, I suggest that you take a deep breath, step away from what you are doing at that moment, and take in “the big picture.” Think about the mission. Think about the reasons we joined the military and the reasons why we stay in. Think about family and country, and how we serve and protect both through the sacrifices we make and the extra margin of excellence we strive for. **Remember that we here at the Air Force Academy have a tremendous opportunity to do something good for our nation and our Air Force. We should strive to uplift each other through adversity and continue to press forward with a positive outlook.**

FINAL THOUGHTS

Acta Non Verba. Actions not words. Be humble and do your duty—in the end, it will be our actions and our attitude that inspire much more than any boasting or self promotion.

Reflect. Never forget why we do what we do. What we do truly is a matter of life and death. The lessons we teach now, intentional or not, will be the lessons our future leaders and warriors take into battle.

Core Values. Integrity First, Service Before Self, Excellence in All We Do. Learn them, live them . . . teach them.

We are part of something great, and we work with some of the finest people in the world. We have a great deal to be thankful for—let it show.